108TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

S. RES. 345

Expressing the Sense of the Senate that Congress should expand the supports and services available to grandparents and other relatives who are raising children when their biological parents have died or can no longer take care of them.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

APRIL 28, 2004

Mrs. CLINTON (for herself, Ms. SNOWE, Mr. KENNEDY, Mr. MILLER, Mr. KERRY, Mr. JOHNSON, Mr. PRYOR, Mr. CORZINE, Mrs. MURRAY, Ms. STABENOW, Ms. MIKULSKI, Mr. BAUCUS, Mr. COCHRAN, Mr. LIEBERMAN, and Mrs. LINCOLN) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions

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RESOLUTION

Expressing the Sense of the Senate that Congress should expand the supports and services available to grandparents and other relatives who are raising children when their biological parents have died or can no longer take care of them.

Whereas 4.5 million children in the United States are living in grandparent-headed households—a 30 percent increase from 1990 to 2000—and an additional 1.5 million children are living in households headed by other relatives;

Whereas 70 percent of grandparents who report they are responsible for the grandchildren living with them are

under the age of 60, many of whom are still in the work-force and making a valuable contribution to the national economy;

Whereas an increasing number of parents are unable to raise their own children due to substance abuse, incarceration, illnesses such as HIV/AIDS, child abuse and neglect, domestic and community violence, unemployment and poverty, and other serious community crises;

Whereas grandparents and other relatives raising children, especially those without formal legal custody or guardianship of the children under their care, face a variety of unnecessary barriers, including difficulties enrolling children in school, authorizing medical treatment, maintaining their public housing leases, obtaining affordable legal services, and accessing a variety of federal benefits and services;

Whereas grandparents and other relatives have stepped forward at great personal sacrifice to their financial and health status, to provide safe and loving homes and keep thousands of children from unnecessarily entering the formal foster care system;

Whereas children feel content to live in an environment with people that they know, who are familiar, and who are able to provide them with extended family as additional support and a family history, which gives them a sense of belonging;

Whereas the time, effort, and unselfish commitment shown by these family members is worthy of recognition;

Whereas almost one-fifth of grandparents who report that they are responsible for the grandchildren living with them live in poverty;

Whereas grandparents and other relatives have taken over the care of abused and neglected children who have been removed from their homes even though they often fail to receive the same services and supports offered to non-related foster parents; and

Whereas grandparents and other relatives, whether raising children inside or outside of the foster care system, need better access to health insurance, respite care, child care, special education, housing, and other benefits, and where appropriate, support from Temporary Assistance For Needy Families, federal foster care and subsidized guardianship programs: Now, therefore, be it

1   *Resolved,* That it is the sense of the Senate that—

2   (1) Congress and all Americans should recog-
3   nize and publicly laud the commitment of grand-
4   parents, aunts, uncles, and other relative caregivers
5   raising children whose parents are unable or unwill-
6   ing to do so;

7   (2) Congress urges institutions and government
8   entities at every level to promote public policies that
9   support, and remove barriers to these caregivers;
10   and

11   (3) Congress should establish new and ex-
12   panded appropriate supports and services, such as
13   respite care, housing, and subsidized guardianship,
14   for grandparents and other relatives who are raising
15   children inside and outside of the foster care system.

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